

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



SAN BERNARDINO UNIT

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SAN BERNARDINO – As firefighters continue their efforts to control the Arrowhead Fire, the Major Incident Investigation Team from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection will begin their work today. The team, headed by a CDF Unit Chief spent last night formulating the process and goals of the investigation. Tom O'Keefe, CDF/San Bernardino Unit Chief says "this investigation will be one of fact finding". The Team includes fire investigators, a training battalion chief and a fire behavior analyst. The team will be looking at a variety of things including the cause and origin of the fire, the weather conditions in the area as well as the class plan for the training burn.

"On Friday, firefighters were learning how to use fire to fight fire. Even though the fire service, including CDF uses simulated training as much as possible just like the military, eventually learning can only be advanced with the real thing. Military pilots must fly and train in their planes, tank crews must operate their tanks, and firefighters must train with live fire. Without the actual reality training, it is impossible for the learner to gain firsthand knowledge of what really happens" said Chief O'Keefe.

It is important to note that this was a training fire not a controlled or vegetation management burn.

Yesterday's training fire was actually a series of several small fires that in total covered less than two acres. Like the military, it is essential that firefighters receive the best training they can. This training involves the use of all fire fighting tactics. As with any training that involves potentially dangerous conditions, the utmost care is given for control of the situation and the safety of those being trained.

It will be the task of the Investigation Team to ascertain the facts of what happened yesterday. The team will then create an official finding that will be delivered to the Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Andrea Tuttle who will then decide how to act on those findings. In the interim, CDF Director Tuttle this morning ordered a second level of review at the unit or region level prior to any live fire training or controlled burn taking place.

This incident is a reminder of how quickly even the smallest fire can grow in these hot, dry conditions. Please be extra careful with fire.

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